



# Understanding Emergency Contraception

## WHAT IS EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION?

- Emergency contraception is safe and effective birth control you can use to prevent pregnancy up to five days (120 hours) after unprotected sex. It is most effective the sooner it is taken.
- There are two types of emergency contraception: oral contraceptives and the IUD.
- You can get some types of oral contraceptives (like Plan B®) without a prescription at drug stores, grocery stores with pharmacies, or health centers.

### EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTIVE OPTIONS:

Plan B®  
(Morning-after pill)

ella®  
(Morning-after pill)

Intrauterine Device (IUD)  
ParaGuard® Liletta®  
and Mirena®

See page 2 for more information on these three options.



Scan this QR code to take a **quiz** that can help you identify the best type of emergency contraception for your situation.

## HORMONAL EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION: FACT CHECK

COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS	TRUTH
1. Emergency contraception will harm an already existing pregnancy.	Emergency contraception prevents you from becoming pregnant in the first place by delaying ovulation and will not harm an existing pregnancy.
2. Emergency contraception can prevent transmission of sexually transmitted infections.	Emergency contraception does not prevent sexually transmitted infections. See a healthcare provider and ask about getting screened if you think you were exposed to an STI.
3. Emergency contraception can be used as a regular form of contraception.	Oral emergency contraception is for “emergency” situations and is not as effective as other contraceptive methods. Consult with your provider about more reliable methods.
4. Emergency contraception will protect me all month until my next period.	Emergency contraception delays ovulation but does not stop it, so you may still ovulate that month, just later than expected.

## USING IUDs FOR EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION

- **Using the Copper IUD (ParaGuard®) as emergency contraception provides protection against pregnancy beyond a one-time use, for up to twelve years.** In addition to the Copper IUD, clinical research demonstrates that levonorgestrel-releasing 52 mg intrauterine devices **Liletta® and Mirena®** are a safe and effective choice for emergency contraception. Talk to a healthcare provider about using Liletta® or Mirena® as emergency contraception.
- Patients need a **negative pregnancy test** prior to placement.
- **Very effective** at preventing implantation of a fertilized egg AND provides up to 12 years of effective reversible contraception.
- IUDs **do not affect** ovulation timing.

## REAL LIFE EXAMPLE



### ACCIDENTS HAPPEN...

*“The condom broke while my partner and I were having sex. I am on the pill but have missed multiple pills this month due to my crazy duty schedule and general forgetfulness. What can I do to protect myself from pregnancy?”*

### YOU HAVE OPTIONS

If you had sex without using birth control or made a mistake using your method, there’s still a way to prevent pregnancy — but you have to act fast. Head to the nearest pharmacy or grocery store with a pharmacy to purchase Plan B® (Plan B® is free at military pharmacies and available without a prescription or consultation with a provider) or contact a healthcare provider to discuss the IUD or ella®. In addition, consider a more reliable birth control method such as a long-acting reversible contraceptive (LARC) if you’re having difficulty with your current method.

## IUD (ParaGuard® Liletta® and Mirena®)

**EFFECTIVENESS:** Most effective

**HOW TO GET:** Inserted by a provider

**WHEN TO USE:** Up to 5 days after unprotected sex

**WHO CAN USE:** All women

**SIDE EFFECTS:** The copper IUD can cause increased cramping for 1-2 weeks after placement. Some people prefer a hormonal IUD over the copper IUD (ParaGuard®) because it can reduce menstrual bleeding and discomfort. Patients should continue to use condoms for the first 7 days after their IUD is inserted.

**COPPER IUD ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:** Provides safe and effective birth control for up to 12 years.

**HORMONAL IUD ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:** Provides safe and effective birth control for up to 7 years.

## ella®

**EFFECTIVENESS:** Highly effective

**HOW TO GET:** Need a prescription from your provider

**WHEN TO USE:** Up to 5 days after unprotected sex

**WHO CAN USE:** All women. May be less effective for women with a body mass index (BMI) > 30.

**SIDE EFFECTS:** Can cause increased headaches, nausea, and abdominal pain.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:** Should wait 5 days after using ella® to resume hormonal birth control methods including the pill. Use a back up method (condoms) if you have sex.

## PLAN B®

**EFFECTIVENESS:** Less effective

**HOW TO GET:** Available to anyone at your local drug store, MTF pharmacy, or grocery store with a pharmacy or health center without a prescription.

**WHEN TO USE:** Up to 3 days after unprotected sex. Less effective on days 4 and 5, but you can still use it.

**WHO CAN USE:** All women. Likely less effective for women with a BMI > 25.

**SIDE EFFECTS:** Can cause increased headaches, nausea, and abdominal pain.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:** Do not use if you have already used ella® since your last period. Can begin using any form of birth control immediately after taking Plan B®.